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EU must suspend ties with Israel to prevent crimes of genocide in Gaza, UN rapporteur says



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The European Union should suspend its trade and institutional ties with Israel to deter war crimes that amount to genocide in the Gaza Strip, the UN's special rapporteur on Palestine has said.

Francesca Albanese - who recently concluded that the threshold of the crime of genocide has been met Gaza - told Euronews on Wednesday that the EU has "an obligation" to suspend its Association Agreement with Israel given that its offensive violates that agreement's provisions on human rights.

"Israel has the political, financial, economic means to continue operating business as usual. It has no incentive whatsoever to change conduct," Albanese explained.

"Europe is the main trading partner - which accounts I think for 30% of Israel's trade - so it has a huge power and it should use that power. In the end, this is not an option, it's an obligation because Article 2 of that association agreement foresees the suspension in case of violations of human rights," she added.

A recent [initiative by the leaders of Ireland and Spain](#) calling on the European Commission to suspend the EU-Israel agreement has been met with resistance by other member states eager to uphold the bloc's stance of solidarity with Israel.

A decision to halt the agreement would require the unanimous backing of all 27 EU member states. But thd bloc's leaders have consistently clashed over their collective stance on the conflict that erupted following Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7th.

Albanese said the EU's reluctance to use the measures in its power to hold Israel to account perpetuates Israel's impunity and reveals a "disconnect" between Europe's political class and the large portion of European society that has persistently [called for a ceasefire](#) in the besieged Gaza Strip.

She also said EU leaders need to take more concrete counter-measures against Israel, including revoking diplomatic recognition and targeted sanctions on government officials.

The formal suspension of trade relations should extend to "private corporations registered under national jurisdictions of EU member states," she said.

Albanese added that the conditions for suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement were in place before October 7th and the triggering of the war in Gaza, given Israel's long history of establishing settlements and the "continuous announced annexation of the occupied Palestinian territory" was already a war crime.

Her report, which also accuses Israel of subverting the language of international law - such as the concepts of "human shields" and "collateral damage" to provide a legal cover for genocide - has been fiercely dismissed by Israel as "obscene."

Calls to scrutinise EU funding for Israeli military companies

Speaking alongside Albanese at the European Parliament, Spanish MEP Manu Pineda of the Left group, who chairs the parliament's Delegation for relations with Palestine, slammed the EU for allegedly funding military ventures in Israel that allow its armed forces to conduct its operations.

He said that drone manufacturers providing their technology to Israel's Armed Forces have received funds from the EU's Horizon Europe project, a [claim recently corroborated](#) in an analysis by two independent monitors, Statewatch and Informationsstelle Militarisierung (IMI).

"Other Israeli military companies and institutions received millions of euros for drone development in recent years, despite a supposed prohibition on EU funding for military and defence projects," the monitors said in their March analysis.

According to MEP Pineda, the EU's "hands are stained in blood" for its failure to ensure its funds do not contribute to Israel's offensive.

"It's shameful that the European Union is still buying and selling arms to Israel that are being used in combat, that are falling on the heads of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip," MEP Pineda said.

It comes as pressure grows on the Biden administration in the US and the German government to stop sending arms to Israel.

The US and Germany combined are estimated to supply some 99% of all arms Israel receives from foreign governments. Estimates put Germany's arms sales to Israel at €300 million in 2023 alone.

On Tuesday, Germany contested charges brought by Nicaragua in the UN's top court claiming Berlin was facilitating crimes of genocide by selling arms to Tel Aviv, claiming such accusations had "no basis in fact or law."

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